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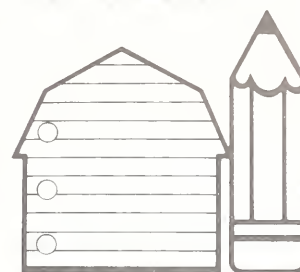
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Ag in the Classroom

Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

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Vol. 4, No. 2

Alaskan Students Collect Vital Snow Data

Snow is a way of life in Alaska. It's also a way of learning, thanks to the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and a group of ambitious teachers.

Seven schools, ranging from elementary to high school, are participating in an elaborate "snow survey." Under the supervision of their teachers and the SCS, students have been systematically measuring snow depth, density and acid content.

How does a snow survey tie into agriculture?

"These measurements will be used to predict wildlife populations, snowpack moisture for spring farming and other environmental conditions," explains SCS Snow Survey Supervisor George Clagett.

Clagett says the school snow survey project was born of coincidence. "A conservationist I know gave a snow survey demonstration at his son's school in Homer, Alaska. At the same time, Gerry Young, a seventh grade teacher in North Pole, Alaska, called me and asked for advice on how to set up a snow survey course for her students. At that point I thought, 'wow, there's potential here.'"

Clagett contacted seven other schools in the state and all showed interest in the snow survey project. "This is more than an unusual teaching aid. The SCS is very interested in the data these students collect. In many parts of Alaska we have poor or inaccurate measurements, and in some remote areas we have none.



"With proper supervision, the students can give us accurate data. They realize how important this information is to us, which adds to the entire learning experience," Clagett explains.

Teacher Gerry Young agrees. "Science should

Teacher Gerry Young shows her North Pole, Alaska, students how to take accurate snow depth measurements.

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National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Reaffirms Support for Ag in the Classroom

Members Recently Agreed on the Following Resolution:

Over the past two decades, the number of farmers in the South has dramatically decreased. Nationally, it is now estimated that only about two percent of the population is made of bona fide

farmers. This trend has impacted on the agricultural literacy of the present generation, since few people have had first-hand experience on farms. Therefore, a large part of the public does not understand the connection between agriculture and

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From the Director

Dear Readers,

Over the past few years, we've all witnessed Ag in the Classroom's rapid growth. Teachers and students in every state have discovered the value of the program.

I'm pleased to report that AITC fever is just as infectious north of the border. Canada has its own version of the program, and representatives from several provinces attended a national two-day conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Former Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz was keynote speaker at the conference.

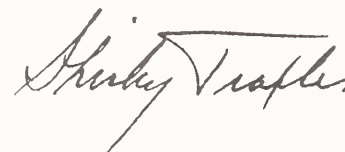
In a recent letter to me, Mr. Butz wrote, "May I congratulate you on the broad extent of this

program in the states. It is very important that we continue to expand this effort."

With your ongoing support, I am confident Ag in the Classroom programs will one day reach all students, not only throughout the United States, but the world.

Keep spreading the word!

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler

Snow Data

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A seventh grader updates snow survey information for classroom records.

be real to students and not just busy work. This project is real. By studying the snow, the students are learning how fragile our environment is."

Young says her seventh graders are learning about more than science and agriculture. They're learning how to cope with the future. "Our primary mission is to study snow density so we can predict the groundwater that will be available for farmers in the spring. However, we also check the acid content of the snow. Students are beginning to understand how acid can upset our environment."

Young's students are dedicated to collecting accurate data. "Sometimes they go out to measure the snow when it's 60 degrees below zero. We have only a few hours of light in the winter, so many of their readings are taken by flashlight!"

Teachers in any state can organize similar projects, Young advises. She said even in areas without snow, students can measure precipitation, temperatures and other conditions. "Children should be aware of all of the natural and man-made influences on their environment. I think once children become interested in the environment, they will remain interested for life."

Support for Ag

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the American lifestyle.

Ag in the Classroom is a grassroots program coordinated by the United States Department of Agriculture. Its goal is to help students gain a greater awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy and society, so that they may become citizens who support wise agricultural policies.

Ag in the Classroom is carried out in each state, according to state needs and interests, by individuals representing farm organizations, agribusiness, education and government. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture recognizes

that the education of our children and youth is critical to maintaining cultivation of food and fiber supplies essential to life.

RESOLVED, that the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, meeting in Reno, Nevada, on September 28, 1988, encourages each member to provide human resources and in-kind support to the states' Ag in the Classroom programs to inform teachers and students about the environmental and economic importance of agriculture in the United States, educate teachers and students about each state's farm products, stimulating interest in the state-grown commodities, and to increase and enhance the teaching of agriculture in schools, making students aware of agricultural career opportunities.

Spotlight

Teacher's Ag Lessons Off to a Running Start

Fifth-grade teacher Ethan Heifetz recently discovered a fast way to motivate his students.

By combining physical education, geography and agriculture into one activity, Heifetz has shown his Eureka, California, students that learning can be fun *and* challenging. (See "Running Across The USA" below.)

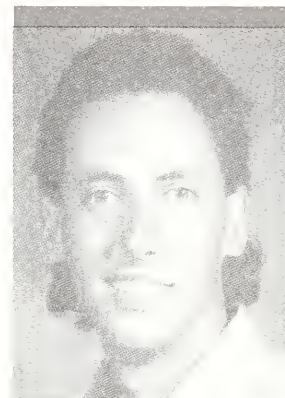
Heifetz explains, "I place a U.S.A. map in the classroom, assign each student a starting point on the map and have them 'run' across several states. When students run a mile on the track during recess, they move their markers 100 miles on the map. Once a student is a half-inch from a state capitol, he or she must complete an ag activity sheet related to that state."

The teacher became interested in the Ag in the Classroom program last summer. "I attended the Summer California Ag Institute and found it very exciting. I discovered that when it came to agri-

culture, I was illiterate. The institute was an excellent experience. I learned that agriculture is an across-the-curriculum topic. Teachers can easily incorporate agriculture into any subject area. Even physical education!"

Although Heifetz's students are surrounded by farms, he believes teaching them about agriculture is important. "My students live in Eureka. Many of them have never had a chance to visit nearby farms. It's an inner-city school system, so these kids are like city kids. They need to learn about agriculture, and the Ag in the Classroom program offers us a perfect opportunity.

"I'm just getting my feet wet with Ag in the Classroom," Heifetz said. "I'm new at it, but I recommend Ag in the Classroom to others. I think if a teacher tries just one thing — just one unit — he or she will become committed to the program. It really grows on you."



Ethan Heifetz



Running Across the U.S.A.

RATIONALE: This program teaches children about U.S. geography and agriculture in a motivating, creative style. On-going teacher involvement determines this program's success.

OBJECTIVES: Students will learn about agriculture in each of the seven regions while participating in a running/walking program. Students will increase their stamina and endurance.

MATERIALS:

clipboard
class list
designated track
U.S.A. wall map
information sheets
pins with students' names attached
rulers
incentives/prizes

PROCEDURE:

Activity Phase

1. Students walk/run during recess and/or lunch time.
2. A student other than the runner is responsible for recording laps on a clipboard. Keep it official

—runners may not record their own laps!

Mapping Phase

1. All students' pins are at the same starting place on the U.S.A. map.
2. As students complete each mile on the track, they move their name pins the equivalent of 100 miles.
3. Movement should be toward a state's capitol. When a student is within 1/2 inch of a capitol, he or she can use an encyclopedia to complete an activity sheet on that state.
4. The teacher may give a prize for every three states completed.

EVALUATION:

teacher observation
degree of student participation
number of completed information sheets
improved endurance

ENRICHMENT: Information sheets can be compiled to make a state information booklet. Students can also participate in graphing activities relating to weekly laps, and the activity can be promoted as a training program for local two-mile runs.

Minnesota Governor Recognizes AITC State Contact

The coordinator responsible for educating thousands of elementary students throughout Minnesota about the value and importance of a productive agricultural system has been selected by Governor Perpich as winner of the Governor's Teamwork Award.

Al Withers of the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom program was presented with the award by Governor Perpich at a ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda. The award is given to a state program or employee that best exhibits an outstanding capacity to organize an effort to achieve a common goal.

The AITC program is now in its third year and distributes a quarterly magazine, *Minnesota Agriculture*, to approximately 62,000 sixth graders and 2,600 educators for use in classroom study. The magazine is written by a consortium of former elementary educators who now develop school curriculum. The program has also published a *Minnesota Guide to Educational Resources About Agriculture* for use in the classroom by K-12 educators and resource specialists.

Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Nichols said he is very pleased that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture is the lead agency for this educational effort and praised the work of Withers and all those affiliated with Ag in the Classroom.

"So many children have no idea of the benefits agriculture gives society," Nichols said. "Our effort here is to present them with agriculture's gifts and hope its importance takes root."

Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich presents AITC State Contact Al Withers with the Governor's Teamwork Award.

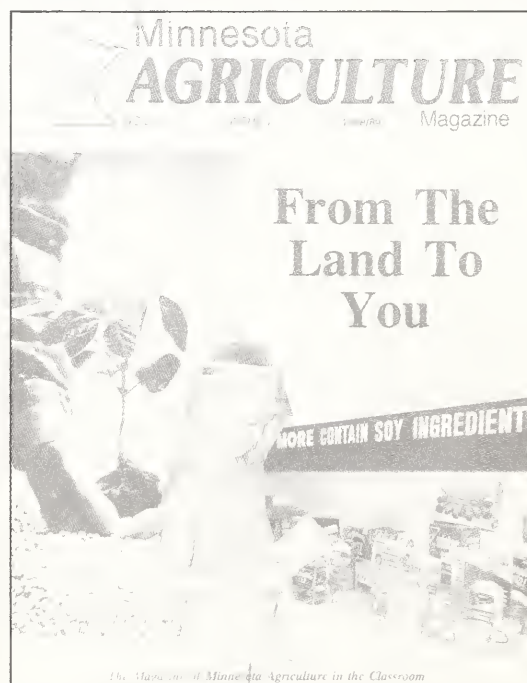


Soy Ink Makes Headlines

Minnesota Agriculture magazine is now printed with soy ink. The last two issues of the quarterly publication were printed with the ink, a product environmentally safer and more plentiful than ink made from the traditional petroleum oil. The soybean product is becoming popular with many printers due to its advantages over petroleum-based inks — vibrant colors and less rub-off.

For more information about *Minnesota Agriculture* magazine, contact Al Withers at (612) 296-6688.

Editor's Note: In the future, your morning newspaper may be printed with soybean ink on another product of agriculture, kenaf. Kenaf, a woody fiber plant, is an annual row crop which can be grown in cotton-producing states. USDA has been engaged in its research and development for several years, and a new kenaf mill is to be constructed in Texas this year.



California AITC Conference's Keynote Speaker Udders A Few Words

By all accounts, last October's California Ag in the Classroom Conference was a great success. Over 150 educators and agricultural professionals attended, the workshops and activities provided new insights, and Hollirex Princess the Cow gave an inspiring keynote speech.

Entitled "Education and Agriculture: Sharing Common Ground," the three-day conference brought together agriculturalists and educators interested in promoting ag education. One of these Ag in the Classroom supporters was a cow.

California state contact Mark Linder explained. "Farmer Don Morelli brought Princess into the Hilton during the conference. He 'interviewed' her during our dinner program while someone stood off stage and actually answered the questions. My wide-eyed four-year-old was there and asked me, 'Daddy, is that cow really talking?'"

Thirteen-year-old Hollirex Princess, the official Spokescow for the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, discusses nutrition, a cow's life and the importance of the dairy industry with audiences of all ages. The talkative Guernsey Milk cow has made live appearances in dozens of classrooms, on television, at a county fair and other events. When she's not on the traveling circuit, Princess maintains a productive spot on the dairy's milking string.

Linder said other highlights of the three-day conference included a visit with apple growers, trips to the state capitol and local ag industries, and a research tour of a biotechnology firm.

"Our primary objective was to involve as many teachers as possible, and we met that objective. In fact, 20 of the teachers were presenters at the workshops and mini-sessions," Linder said. He



Spokescow Hollirex Princess, keynote speaker at California conference, milks fame for all its worth.

noted the teachers shared experiences and left the conference with many new ideas.

Workshop topics included careers in agriculture, working with volunteers, evaluating teacher resources and soil conservation.

"This conference was such a success that we're already talking about organizing a similar one next year," Linder said.

Mark your calendar, Princess!

Get Ready for National Agriculture Day

National Agriculture Day was first proclaimed an official national observance by an act of Congress and a Presidential Proclamation in March 1981. The mission of National Ag Day is simple: to provide a special recognition of the food and fiber industry's contribution to America — a salute to the over 21 million men and women responsible for this production miracle.

A recent Joint Resolution, cosponsored by more than 200 members of Senate and passed by voice vote, declared the 1989 observance of National Agriculture Day to be March 20.

By popular demand, the Ag Day poster reproducing a Bart Forbes oil painting is ready for distribution again. The poster will retail this year at \$7.50 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling.

Also available is the Agriculture Education Kit, a multipurpose kit designed to educate and entertain

simultaneously. Stitched into the kit are the following components: the Constitution Story (with an agricultural slant), five brief biographical profiles of famous people in agriculture, a two-page spread of fun facts about agriculture with humorous illustrations, a large agricultural crossword puzzle and two fact cards with the most requested agricultural statistics from across the nation.

The kit is adaptable and can be used throughout the year. It has a contemporary look with pockets on the front and back flaps for additional inserts, a feature that allows different states and organizations to customize the kit by inserting their own material.

For more information, contact: Melissa Loomis or Paul Wagner at (202) 682-9200 or write to them at Agriculture Council of America, 1250 Eye Street, Suite 601, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Ohio Graduate Students Study AITC

As part of a study to measure children's agricultural knowledge, a group of Ohio teachers will be trained in AITC principles and sent back to their classrooms to put them into practice.

Instructors who have never used an AITC curriculum will participate in the research study to be conducted by The Ohio State University Departments of Agricultural Education and Cooperative Extension.

Graduate student Don Antram lists five objectives for the study, which will form his Master's thesis. These are: 1) to measure students' knowledge of agriculture; 2) to examine their agricultural experiences; 3) to investigate the background of students and their families; 4) to measure students' ability in regard to an agriculture curriculum; and 5) to examine students' perceptions of agriculture.

Fourth graders have been chosen as the target of the research. "The main reason for choosing fourth graders is because they are quite impressionable and begin to form their own opinions at this age level," explained Antram.

"Fourth grade is a turning point," says Bob Horton, curriculum specialist for the 4-H program at Ohio State. Horton is helping develop materials for the study. Horton sees a lot of enthusiasm for the project, from both teachers and those conducting the study. "The public is ready for it and teachers seem to embrace what we're trying to do," he said.

Along with Horton, ag education graduate stu-

dents are busy compiling lesson plans for the pilot program. Much of the material they will draw will be gathered from other states' programs and adapted for the study.

A teacher training workshop will be conducted in January. Horton explained that the program can be taught as a two-week unit, or spread out over the month. As always, the curriculum is designed to be incorporated into the present course of study, using agriculturally-based examples to explain concepts in math, science, language arts and history.

April is the target month for implementing the course. Observers will visit classrooms to gather information on the program's effectiveness, and will present their findings in June, with specific recommendations for utilization of the curriculum.

County agricultural agents will also play a major role in the study, when they begin training teachers statewide in the Fall of 1989. They will also be available to visit classrooms and provide materials for teachers. An impact study will take place in January 1990 to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Antram intends to share his findings with the State Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Ag Awareness Council, commodity groups, agricultural businesses and many other organizations which would benefit from the information. "I hope that I may contribute to developing these children into better consumers as adults," he says.

Farm Meets City in Connecticut



The Connecticut Farm/City Committee recently hosted an open house at the Vocational Agriculture Center, Bulkeley High School, Hartford, Connecticut. With agriculture exhibits and activities featured, the idea was to foster the relationship between farm and city.

"The 10,000 children and adults who visited were able to view chicks, bees, a sow and her piglets, sheep, a beef cow, dairy animals, ponies, trees and several exhibits depicting opportunities for careers in agriculture," said Dawn Pindell, committee chairman and Windham County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Executive Director.

Smokey the Bear greeted the children as they arrived. They were also entertained by a broccoli and a milk carton that answered questions about food. "The children really enjoyed seeing and touching the many displays," said Pindell.

Diane Holowaty, ASCS program assistant, designed *From Farm To City*, a coloring book for kindergarten through fourth grade students. Private donations were sought by the committee to print the books for 5,000 Hartford children. Another 5,000 books were printed to distribute in the Waterbury school system.

At the Hartford event, guest speakers included Kenneth Anderson, Commissioner of Agriculture;



Carrie Saxon Perry, Mayor of Hartford; and John Anderson of the New Haven Experiment Station. An official statement from Governor William O'Neill designated November 13-19, 1988, as Farm-City Week in Connecticut.

An open house hosted by the Farm/City Committee in cooperation with the VoAg and the Waterbury Parks Department will be held in June of 1988.

Fifi Scoufopoulos, chairperson of Connecticut Ag in the Classroom, said, "Scattering seeds of education and cooperation make these activities worthwhile events."

New Booklet Profiles Women Scientists, Encourages Students

JAN/FEB. 1989

A new booklet published by the University of Maine, *Careers for Women in the Applied Sciences*, introduces students in junior and senior high school to women working in the applied sciences. The booklet, designed to give students a brief look at the work women scientists do and how they feel about it, may awaken or strengthen the reader's interest in an applied science career.

A number of factors seem to discourage young women from preparing for careers that involve mathematics and science. As a result, only a small percentage of women working today are scientists. Their continuing absence is a loss to the professions and a waste of human talent.

If a young woman is encouraged to take all the mathematics and science courses she can in junior and senior high, her options for future work and study would be increased many times.

In addition, students are motivated to pursue careers in scientific professions, when more information is available about the variety of careers women are discovering in the applied sciences.

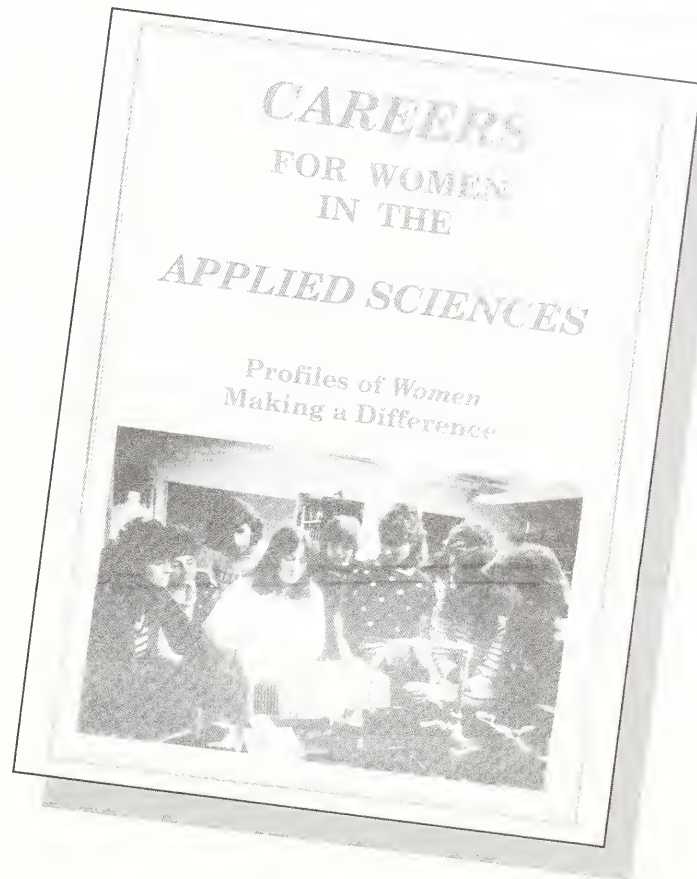
The Applied Sciences faculty and administrators at the University of Maine, Orono, feel privileged to share the insights of the 23 women profiled who work in such areas as environment, applied economics, food, plants and animals. The author, Assistant Dean Nancy S. Bragg, hopes readers will want to know more about the women in the booklet.

The 23 women have formed a speakers' bureau, and will talk to interested groups and classes about their experiences. Work-site field trips and in-depth interviews about a particular field can also be arranged.

Additional information about University of Maine programs designed to prepare young women for

careers in science can be obtained by contacting Nancy S. Bragg, Assistant Dean, 103 Winslow Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469. Dean Bragg is also available to visit schools and groups. Call (207) 581-3202 for more information.

The *Careers for Women in the Applied Sciences* booklets are available from Applied Sciences, 103 Winslow Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Me 04469. Single copies are free. Additional copies cost 75 cents each, with a discount for larger quantities. Call (207) 581-3202.



Careers for Women in the Applied Sciences profiles the professional backgrounds of 23 women scientists. The goal of the booklet is to encourage young women to consider pursuing similar careers.

Good News: Ag School Enrollments and Starting Salaries Up!

After a decade-long decline in the number of students studying agriculture sciences and related fields, many of the nation's land-grant university officials are reporting increased enrollments this year in their colleges of agriculture.

The officials say renewed interest in agricultural studies is coming at a time of increasing demand for agriculture and life sciences professionals.

"This fall, undergraduate enrollments have taken a long-awaited upturn at many agricultural colleges," says J. Patrick Jordan, administrator of USDA's Cooperative State Research Service. "At other schools, enrollments of agriculture majors have begun to stabilize after years of fewer and fewer ag majors."

Jordan says USDA has taken a national leadership role in developing initiatives to attract

students to careers in agriculture. "We've been working closely with universities for several years to help strengthen recruitment efforts and curriculum," he says.

Starting salaries are also up. Campus placement officials report that the nation's agricultural businesses are offering better starting salaries to get the graduates they want. Graduates with superior records in highly demanded fields can command starting wages exceeding \$30,000. Employers in more expensive metropolitan areas offer even higher salaries.

One land-grant university official sums up the situation concisely: "There is not a single agriculture graduate in our college who is having trouble finding an entry level job — it's the best job market I've seen in 20 years."

Ag in the Classroom — State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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